
UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee
9th March 2005
Draft Minutes

Present

Brian Harding	Defra (chair)	Sarah Webster	Defra
Mark Avery	RSPB	Andy Stott	Defra
Bob Brown	NIBG	David Parker	CCW
Jane Dalgleish	SE	John Baxter	SNH
John Faulkener	DOENI	June Milligan	WAG
Pete Brotherton	EN	Paul Rose	JNCC
Paula Hendy	Defra	John Angell	Defra

Apologies

Jeff Watson	SNH represented by John Baxter
Keith Duff	EN represented by Pete Brotherton
Miles Parker	BRAG represented by Andy Stott
Martin Harper	
Fiona Mettam	

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The chair welcomed all present.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. The majority of action points had been completed or were on the agenda. Andy Stott confirmed that there had been no follow up of the action point at 4.3 for BRAG to consider issues appropriate to CEH programme and refer to Keith Duff, although the position statement summaries that had now been developed would help with this type of exercise in the future.

3. Indicators

- 3.1 Andy Stott introduced paper UKBSC 05-01, a report exploring whether it was necessary, and appropriate, to develop a set of biodiversity headline indicators to assess overall progress towards 2010 targets in the UK. The small working group consisting of Defra and JNCC representatives had agreed on two strands of work – a review of drivers for UK level indicators and cross comparison of UK & country level indicators with the CBD and EU indicators framework.
- 3.2 AS explained that devolution had led to a number of different approaches within countries of the UK and invited the committee's views on what should be produced at UK level in the light of EU commitments.
- 3.3 Bob Brown drew attention to the need to consider who would be taking action as a result of the indicators, as this crucially affected their selection, and the extent to which it was worthwhile to invest time in their development. David Parker expressed concerned that as 2010 was only five years away there was little point in developing new reporting

infrastructure – anything we developed now should be with a view to reporting to the EU and wider frameworks in the long term – beyond 2010.

- 3.4 In conclusion, the UK Standing Committee endorsed the development of small “basket” of headline indicators at UK level to enable us to report progress towards 2010. These should be focussed on biodiversity outcomes but could include a small number of indicators of process – e.g. policy change, particularly where there was likely to be a lag between achieving the desired change and the biological outcome of this change. They should use existing data sources and avoid creating new burdens on the four administrations, while conforming to EU & CBD frameworks as closely as possible, with the further principal aim that the indicators should be enduring providing a good communication vehicle for biodiversity beyond 2010.
- 3.5 Brian Harding stressed the need to move forward quickly on this in the light of the forthcoming UK Partnership meeting and meeting of the Welsh Biodiversity Partnership Meeting on 21 June. It was agreed that Andy Stott would consult interested parties including JNCC, the administrations and country bodies and come back to the next steering group meeting with an initially inclusive list of sensible, high-level indicators setting out briefly the pros and cons of each, how far back the data series for each went, and what is currently done in the four countries. This would enable the UKSC to select a condensed set of headline indicators.

Action : Andy Stott to consult interested parties and prepare a paper setting out an inclusive list of candidate headline indicators, with pros and cons, for next UKSC meeting.

4. BRAG Presentation

- 4.1 Andy Stott presented the progress made by BRAG and its sub groups who have met and agreed objectives for the following four themes: impacts of introduced species, monitoring of biodiversity & evaluation of actions, management of habitats & ecosystems, and socio-economic issues. The Committee’s views were invited on the general direction of BRAG’s work e.g. the line-up with the Message from Malahide themes, the interactions with other BAP groups, and the value of the outputs – currently focused on the short summaries of priorities. BRAG’s current schedule of work was due to finish in July 2006 and so the group would be reviewing its progress and direction over the next 12 months.
- 4.2 Brian Harding felt that the Committee should be more engaged in what BRAG are doing. June Milligan welcomed the presentation which told the Committee about outputs not just process, but questioned the need to maintain an infrastructure to monitor the follow-up. Some felt that the list was still quite long, but AS explained that it was difficult to prioritise further given the different agendas of those represented on the group; to some extent this had been resolved by identifying which organisation was willing to lead on a particular topic and which to contribute. John Faulkener commended the group on its tremendous analysis of priorities, but would like to see a synthesis of these by July 2006 in the form of a

paper that set out the most crucial aspects and presented these in a way that was more immediately understandable in policy terms, so that it could be related to drivers like the sustainable development framework. David Parker welcomed the UK steer on research priorities and hoped that it would carry some weight with the larger research funders.

- 4.3 In conclusion, the UK Standing Committee was grateful to BRAG for the work that it had done. It would be useful to ground this in some of the work that the UK Standing Committee is taking forward – for example on development of UK headline indicators which was particularly germane to BRAG subgroup on monitoring. It would be helpful if the Chairman of BRAG could attend the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

5. BRIG Reports

- 5.1 Paul Rose presented paper UKBPSC- 05-03 – a short introduction into the work of BRIG and its four sub groups. Towards the end of 2004, a BRIG Climate Change Sub-Group was formed. This group is currently working on a non-technical Guide outlining the principles of climate change. BRIG sought Standing Committee approval to take forward work on the non-technical guide. Standing Committee agreed that they needed to see detailed scope before approving of non-technical guide. This could be signed off by email correspondence.

Action: Climate change subgroup, via BRIG, to provide UK Standing Committee with an outline of the proposed guide, for sign off by correspondence.

- 5.2 Mark Avery asked how far away we were from having a solution to the information gap described in the paper. Paul Rose responded that work was in progress but there were tough decisions to be made before setting up any new monitoring programme as this involved committing scarce resources far into the future. It was agreed that the information sub-group would report to the next meeting of the Standing Committee where there were information gaps that made it impossible to review the priority status of species or habitats.

Action: information sub-group to report to next meeting of the Standing Committee where there were information gaps that make it impossible to review the priority status of species or habitats

5.3 Scoping the analysis of the 2005 reporting round

Paul Rose presented this report which had been requested by the Standing Committee at the last meeting. It was becoming difficult for BRIG to plan its work in the absence of clarity on how the countries would be taking this work forward, and PR offered presentations to country groups on how the analysis could be used by them. Paul invited comments to be sent to by email – immediately if comments related to about how data was collected, but to a longer timescale for comments relating to the presentation of the analysis. Members of the committee commended the approach to the analysis, but would be taking the opportunity to feed comments back to Paul. Policy colleagues using the data from previous reporting rounds sometimes found it difficult to know what it meant and it was felt that something had been lost in the

abstraction. Data from the 2005 reporting round would be made available on the Web, with suitable caveats about who it could and could not be used. It was agreed that it would be helpful if members of the Standing Committee could consider carefully target audiences drawn from policy colleagues in the areas we were trying to influence – e.g. on Farmland Birds, Sustainable Development, ODPM, Dti, DFT so that presentations to these groups on the results of the reporting round could be arranged early in 2006. The reporting group were also asked to consider their timetable and any additional expertise they would need to equip them to move into the area of presentation of the analysis.

Action: Members of UK Standing Committee to consult Country groups and recommend to Standing Committee with suggested audience for presentations to relevant policy leads.

Action: reporting group to look at their current timetable, and consider the need for any additional expertise to be co-opted onto the group. To report back to Standing Committee for next meeting.

5.4 **Priority Species & Habitats Review Group**

Paul Rose explained that review group had agreed a process for Stage 1 and had outlined the principles for Stages 2 and 3; the Standing Committee was therefore asked to sign off Stage 1 and approve principles for Stages 2 and 3.

5.5 June Milligan was concerned to avoid any further elaboration of the listing process. The status and terminology of the Stage 1 and 2 lists needed to be considered carefully, as the audience was already confused. Bob Brown was similarly concerned and felt that the terminology should make it clear that these were updates of existing lists, rather than new lists. Mark Avery agreed that there was a danger of confusion and sought clarification on stage one objectives. Paul Rose clarified that Stage 1 was essentially an update of the list of species of conservation concern (“SOCC”), i.e. a list of species that meet certain criteria; it was likely to be longer now because more was known about certain species’ declines.

5.6 With regard to Stage 2, June Milligan emphasised the need to have country group involvement. Brian Harding agreed that it was important to engage country groups at Stage 2, as there was a risk that people would not understand how the list had been derived and therefore not be happy with it. It was therefore agreed that BRIG would present the Stage 2 list to country groups, making it explicit how the Stage 1 list had been filtered to derive the Stage 2 list, what the Stage 2 list meant, and what engagement was expected. In conclusion, Committee agreed the broad principles of Stage 2 subject to appropriate engagement with country groups before Stage 2 finished and Stage 3 began. It was also agreed that committee would need to sign off the guidance note to experts for the Stage 2 process, which needed to have been cleared by BRIG first.

Action : BRIG to approve guidance note to experts for the Stage 2 process, before passing to UK Standing Committee for sign-off. BRIG and PSHRG to present the Stage 2 list to country groups,

making it explicit how the Stage 1 list had been filtered to derive the Stage 2 list, what the Stage 2 list means, and what engagement from country groups is expected.

6. UK Biodiversity Conference

- 6.1 SW outlined speaker proposals for the conference in June 2005 and invited any feedback from the Committee, especially further suggestions for speakers.
- 6.2 June Milligan welcomed the opportunity that had been provided for an open forum discussion but would like to see more time provided for this. John Faulkner suggested changing the title (currently “Delivering the 2010 Target and beyond – joined up action for biodiversity”) as it gave the impression it was only open to those who knew something about the 2010 targets. (This has now been changed to “Halting biodiversity loss by 2010 – joined up action”.)
- 6.3 Jane Dalgleish felt there was a need to be clear what people could expect to gain from attending the conference, as she was keen to get potential Scottish delegates interested; if the UK process is to be sustained, the conference needs to be seen as relevant by all the people involved.

7. EU and CBD Progress

- 7.1 John Angell presented report on progress made within EU and CBD.

He explained that in October 2001, the Council and Parliament had endorsed the sectoral Action Plans developed under the European Community Biodiversity Strategy. The Environment Council had stressed the need to assess the effective implementation of the Strategy and Action Plans, and to enhance complementarity between the strategies of the Community and Member States. It also requested the Commission report on this implementation in 2003 and every three years thereafter. A Biodiversity Expert Group was also established to enhance the complementarity of the process - including NGOs, industry, civil society.

- 7.2 The assessment carried out by this consultative process in the year leading up to Malahide found that, while there had been some success in implementation, there had also been some shortfalls, some of which were serious. The review also highlighted the need to address the next steps with respect of most actions laid down in the BAPS. Perhaps, most importantly, the review found that current EU Biodiversity Policy is missing a key element if we are to meet the 2010 targets – a clear sense of priority which has broad-based agreement among key stakeholders.
- 7.3 JA went on to explain that while the content of the ‘Message from Malahide’ does not have the status of international agreement, the depth and breadth of the consultative process which underlies it, the level of expertise engaged, and the remarkable degree of consensus obtained lend it considerable weight. The message outlined priority objectives and detailed targets designed to meet the EU commitment to halt the decline of biodiversity by 2010 and to optimise the EU contribution to the global to the achievement by 2010 of a significant reduction in the current rate

of loss of biodiversity. Malahide also rests alongside pan-European commitments set out in the Kiev Biodiversity Resolution.

- 7.4 The Environment Council of June 2004 took note of the Message from Malahide, and urged the Commission to submit, as early as possible in 2005, a report to Council and Parliament on its assessment of the implementation, effectiveness and appropriateness of each of the objectives and targets set out in the EU Strategy and Action Plans taking into account the consultative process now concluded and notably the Message from Malahide.
- 7.5 It was expected that even allowing the change in Commission in Autumn 2004 the material available made the timescale set out in the Council Conclusions quite reasonable. We were therefore surprised to learn at the Biodiversity Expert Group in January, that DG ENV were now working to a timetable of November 2005 for completion of their Communication in response, other priorities such as completion of thematic strategies cited. We have been and will continue to press for a rethink on this aimed at shortening this timetable.
- 7.6 During a visit last week to Defra by Catherine Day, Director General ENV, the opportunity was taken to make clear to her that we and other Member States regarded this delay of 18 months between Malahide and the Communication as unacceptable. Regrettably her response was that the timetable could not move much, there was only so much the market could bear and the formal thematic strategies were the priority.
- 7.7 JA finalised his report by emphasising that we would be taking the opportunity to raise the profile of biodiversity both within and outside the UK Presidency at scheduled meetings of the European Platform for Biodiversity research and the EU nature Directors meeting in October. The theme of the Directors Meeting, which Brian Harding will chair, is Biodiversity and Climate Change – to 2010 and beyond. It is hoped that within that meeting, to invite IUCN to give a presentation on progress towards the 2010 target as part of their countdown 2010 initiative.
- 7.8 Jane Dalglish congratulated JA on thoroughly interesting report which she greatly appreciated, and requested follow up reports wherever possible. She expressed her concern that Malahide would be elevated to a status higher than that which it perhaps deserved. JA reassured her that this would not happen but it was important to take its findings into consideration.

8. Any other business

- 8.1 The chair announced that this would be the last meeting attended by John Faulkener and thanked him for his considerable contribution to the group and its predecessors, as well as to biodiversity in its broadest sense, over the years.

9. Date of next meeting

Thursday, 22 September, Temple Quay, Bristol